

From the Hotline

- Q. I have a TAFDC case consisting of a grandmother, who is nonexempt, and two grandchildren, ages four and six. Do the grandchildren remain eligible for TAFDC after the 24 months even if the assistance unit that they were in was nonexempt for 24 months?
- A. A non-legally liable grantee, such as a grandmother, who is included in the grant and is nonexempt, has a clock and when she reaches month 24, she will lose eligibility. A non-legally liable grantee who is ineligible due to time limits will, however, be able to receive assistance for the children only.
- Q. I have a recipient who was exempt and became nonexempt when her youngest child turned two. The program code change was not made for several months. When does the clock start ticking for this recipient? Is it when the child turned two or is it when the Transitional Assistance Worker changed the program code?
- A. The clock starts ticking once the program code is changed. The first month counted toward the 24-month limit is the first full nonexempt calendar month. Therefore, it is important that coding is timely and accurate.
- Q. If I have a recipient who should have been exempt instead of nonexempt, do I subtract the months in error from the PRISM II clock?
- A. In this situation, you must subtract months that were added because the recipient was incorrectly coded as nonexempt. The adjustment reason on the PRISM II clock adjustment screen is "exemption status change." Transitional Assistance Office Directors and Assistant Directors should refer to *PRISM II User's Guide*, Chapter V for guidelines on making clock adjustments.
- Q. I have a teen parent living in a TLP with her child who is over the age of two. The teen parent has her GED certificate. Does the 24-month time limit policy apply to her?
- A. No, the teen is exempt from the time-limited benefit rule because she is living in a TLP and complying with their rules and regulations. See 106 CMR 203.100. The PACES codes are program code A and action reason 16.
- Q. A nonexempt recipient who has used 10 months of time-limited benefits has given custody of the child to the other parent who does

not live with the recipient. The other parent is now applying for assistance. Can the other parent receive the full 24 months of benefits?

- A. Yes, the other parent can receive the full 24 months because the time-limited benefits rule applies to each nonexempt grantee.
- Q. I have a two-parent household. One parent is nonexempt, the other parent is exempt due to disability. When the nonexempt parent reaches the end of his 24-month time, will the entire case close?
- A. Yes. In a two-parent household when either grantee reaches the end of his or her 24 months, the entire assistance unit is ineligible. See 106 CMR 203.200.
- Q. A recipient's grant was suspended for a month due to a five-week monthly reporting month. Do we add this month to the recipient's 24-month clock?
- A. No. PRISM II is programmed not to count this month because the recipient had a zero benefit month due to earnings. See *PRISM II User's Guide*, Appendix C, 24-Month Clock Specification Details for the exact accretion requirements.

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- Q. I have a recipient who is a grandfathered case. How is she affected by the time limits?
- A. Grandfathered cases which do not meet one of the exemption criteria found at 106 CMR 203.100 are subject to the time limit and do have a 24-month clock. However, because of their grandfathered status they remain eligible for TAFDC as long as is necessary to complete the program for which they were grandfathered, even if that extends beyond the 24-month clock. If their 24-month clock has expired when the program is completed, they will have 60 days to find employment. At the end of 60 days, unless otherwise eligible, their assistance will end. If their 24-month clock has not expired when they finish their program, they may remain eligible for the balance of the 24 months, subject to all usual program requirements.

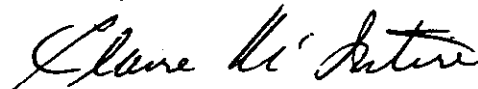
While recipients are eligible as grandfathered, they also continue to be eligible for all services including child care and transportation.

care? Is there an issue of domestic violence? Would a short training course in addition to their community service help them to get a better job? Have they perhaps been at one community service site too long and would a move to a new site put them in a better position to obtain a job? What are their plans? What are they thinking about? What are they worried about?

From your perspective as a worker trying to assist your recipients, have you made them aware of transitional child care and MassHealth when their case closes? Have you made sure they understand how to access child care now? Have you discussed child support and how receiving regular child support in addition to their wages may make a big difference in the financial well-being of their family? Have you made them aware of both the federal and state Earned Income Credit? Have you observed any problems which you think may be hindering the individual in their search for a better job?

There is not one answer for all of our recipients. Many of them are, however, facing the same reality of time-limited benefits. The Transition Plan and your discussions with recipients about their plans are a critical part of preparing families for the possible end of financial assistance. I ask for your continued commitment in this vitally important area.

Sincerely,



Claire McIntire
Commissioner

Poverty is the **A JOB**
Problem... **IS THE**
SOLUTION!
